DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 306 PS 014 830

TITLE	Single Parent Adoption.
INSTITUTION	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	DHHS-OHDS-81-30306
PUB DATE	Apr 81
CONTRACT	DHHS-105-79-1102
NOTE	29p.
AVAILABLE FROM	LSDS, Department 76, Washington, DC 20402 (Publication No. OHDS-81-30306, single copy free of charge).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adopted Children; *Adoption; Age; Comparative Analysis; Demography; *Emotional Adjustment; Extended Family; Minority Groups; National Surveys; *One Parent Family; Placement
IDENTIFIERS	*Single Parent Adoption

ABSTRACT

Presenting two views of the single-parent family, this pamphlet includes an article by two researchers (William Feigelman and Arnold R. Silverman) and a short statement by a single adoptive parent (Amanda Richards). The first paper summarizes earlier research on single-parent adoptions and discusses the results of a nationwide survey of 713 adoptive parents made in 1974 to 1976. Respondents to the mailed questionnnaire included 58 single adoptive parents. The adoptive single-parent sample was compared with the adopted couple sample in terms of place of residence, income, occupation, religious and political beliefs, age, and contact with extended family members. Single parents reported more difficulties in adopting children and were more likely to adopt "hard-to-place" children. Adoptive single parents reported more adjustment problems on the part of their children, but these problems appeared to be related to the fact that single parents tend to adopt older children more frequently than couples do. While the availability of extended families and friends was not important in determining the success of single-parent adoption, the attitudes of these groups toward the adoption were important. It was concluded that the results of this research offer support for the practice of single-parent adoption. In the second paper, a single woman describes her experiences in becoming an adoptive parent. Included are excerpts from her diary during the adoption process and a description of what the adoption has meant in terms of her daily schedule, work, and social life. (CB)

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SINGLE PARENT ADOPTION

These papers were selected for reprint because each looks at the single parent family from a different perspective. Included are the views of two researchers, and a single adoptive parent.

Prepared by the National Adoption Information Exchange System for the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Human Development Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

DHHS Publication No. (OHDS) 81-30306
Issued April 1981

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INTRODUCTION

Adoption professionals readily agree that the adoption picture has changed radically over the years. Today, workers across the country are committed to finding adoptive homes for youngsters who require special efforts in their behalf: older, physically or emotionally handicapped, and minority group children.

But finding permanent and loving homes for the children who wait is no small task. Where are the families who'll adopt them? Not only has our population of waiting children shifted dramatically, but our view of the family has undergone change. Of necessity, it must if we are to tap every available resource and give every child a fair chance at belonging to a family of his or her own.

As agencies attempt to meet the challenges of finding families for an increasing number of children with special needs, they are finding that they must re-examine their eligibility policies and practices. New criteria for eligibility for adoptive parenthood are being established, and a new population of eligible people is emerging. Once considered unsuitable, the single parent is slowly becoming accepted as a viable resource for the children who wait. No longer is the one-parent home considered the placement of last resort. Indeed, the single man or woman may be, for some children, the family of choice.

In the papers that follow, single parent adoption is viewed from the perspective of 2 researchers and a single parent.

In their paper, "Single Parent Adoptions," William Feigelman and Arnold R. Silverman review the literature and present the findings of their study. They conclude, "The results obtained in this research offer positive support for the new and growing practice of single parent adoption." Their study further confirms the notion that single adoptive parents possess unusually high commitments to parenting.

In the article entitled, "On Becoming A Single Adoptive Parent," Amanda Richards provides us with the opportunity to gain further insight into the meaning of adoption as it is experienced by a single adoptive parent, as she shares with us some of her personal experiences and feelings during the homestudy process and placement of her 3 daughters.

It is clear that adoption professionals will need to continue to prepare to meet the challenges of finding homes for special-needs children. The fact that single parents can successfully provide the warmth and nurturance that many of these children need is surely a positive sign for the future.

James Elton Green

Council on Adoptable Children

SINGLE PARENT ADOPTIONS

Adoption by single individuals represents a relatively unprecedented phenomenon in the field of American social services. In the past such a policy would have been considered "unthinkable" by most agency workers. Earlier viewpoints assumed that only couples possessed the necessary role models and resources that could offer children psychologically supportive experiences. Today, however, child care professionals and social workers are increasingly aware of the large number of children who are permanently estranged from their families. These professionals are intimately acquainted with the fates of children whose early lives consist of passage through a series of foster and institutional residences. Ultimately, these children are likely to be disproportionally overrepresented in reformatories, prisons and mental institutions. Agency personnel have become increasingly receptive to new alternatives that could offer children permanency in a familial context.

Child care professionals have also become aware of the changing nature of American family life: increasing divorce, and the large numbers of children growing up in the absence of close association with both parents. As American family lifestyles have become varied and as single parenting has become a relatively commonplace experience, agency personnel have begun to consider placing children in one parent homes, especially in cases where institutionalization or long-term foster care would be the only other likely alternative.

Perhaps the earliest relatively large scale effort at single parent placements was undertaken by the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions, when forty children were placed in single parent homes during 1966 and 1967.[1] More recently, the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions reports that 379 children have been placed in single parent homes.[2] Across the country the number of single parent

placements slowly and steadily continues to mount. Single parent adoptions have been made in a number of American cities, including Washington, D.C., Chicago, New York City, Portland, Oregon, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, and Bridgeport, Connecticut.[3] Nationwide, approximately between 1,000 and 2,000 single parent adoptions have been affected.

Alfred Kadushin's research has been particularly influential in stimulating single parent placements. Reviewing the research evidence of children reared in "fatherless" families in the areas of mental health, emotional adjustments, suicide, delinquency, and sexual identification he found no compelling evidence that single parent family life is inherently or necessarily pathogenic. He states:

> *Research seems to indicate that children are able to surmount the lack of a father and some of the real shortcomings of a single parent home. . . the material survival suggests greater appreciation of the variety of different kinds of contexts in which children can be reared in without damage.*[4]

Yet, the philosophy governing single parent adoptions has viewed these placements as less desirable and the single prospective adopter is perceived as an adoptive parent of last resort. In most situations, single parents have been assigned older, minority, and handicapped children—the least preferred kinds of children, whose emotional, physical, and social needs are considerable, often exceeding those of most other children. Although consistent with the laws of supply and demand and the child welfare perspective these placements appear paradoxical: those who are felt to possess the least resources to parent have been assigned the children who would seem to require the most demanding kinds of care.

Questions arise regarding the success of these adoptions. How well do children adjust in single parent homes? How well do their adjustments compare with children reared in two parent adoptive

homes? Moreover, what are the common social characteristics among single parent adopters? How do these characteristics compare with those of other adoptive couples? In selecting prospective single adoptive parents, agencies generally insist that applicants have close relationships with their extended families to aid with the many demanding tasks of child rearing. How essential are extended family involvements for facilitating children's adjustments? Are there other sources of support which single parents utilize to meet the demands of child rearing?

A Review of the Research

The limited research done to date indicates wholly positive results for the children adopted by single individuals. The earliest published study based upon eight adoptive placements, undertaken by the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions, came to the following conclusion:

> *Our experience with single-parent adoptive placements has, to date, been very promising. In no instance have we observed regression on the part of any of these children. There has been steady progress in the development of the child as a person in his adoptive home, and in several instances, the development has been truly dramatic.*[5]

A later study, also conducted under the auspices of the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions, was based on thirty-six single parent placements.[6] This study found that of thirty-six single parent adopters, thirty-five were women. Blacks were overrepresented (almost 66 percent). Although the sample varied in its educational achievements, sample members tended to be more highly educated than most; half had completed at least some college. Most had close relationships with extended family members; 66 percent of the women were formerly married. Most sample members were employed

and incomes ranged from $3,000 to $13,000. Although this research was primarily descriptive, it was noted that, "these thirty-six case records strongly suggest that the children involved have found true 'familiness'."[7]

More recently, Joan Shireman and Penny Johnson[8] completed a study of thirty-one single parent adoptions of Black infants in the Chicago area between 1970 and 1972. Eighteen of these families were reinterviewed three years later.

Like the Etnel Branham study most single parents were women; most were Black; most had been married before. Although educational backgrounds, occupations, and incomes varied, comparable trends were noted with this sample: The Chicago group was somewhat high in occupational status, half of the sample were engaged in professional occupations, with low to moderate incomes; the median income was only $9,000. The group also appeared to be extended family oriented.

Although initial adjustments of the children tended to be somewhat negative, two months later, their adjustments were reported to be problem free by 81 percent of the parents. Trained interviewers substantially confirmed parental assessments. A followup study conducted three years later showed only two of the eighteen children in the reinterviewed families to have emotional adjustment problems.

Many questions, however, remain unanswered. Almost no information has been acquired on the smaller but growing number of male single adoptive parents.

Because these three studies have been completed with clients served by two agencies—the Los Angeles Department of Adoptions and the Chicago Child Care Society—it is unclear whether the social characteristics of these single parents accurately reflect the single parent population, whether they represent selection criteria of the agencies, local features, or some combination of all three factors. A

survey drawing single parents from a diversity of sources and localities, would offer a better base to form a general picture of single adoptive parents.

Further, in discussing adjustments of adopted children in single parent homes, studies should be designed that offer some kind of control population, for example, comparisons with other children who were not placed in single parent homes. In the present survey the authors have attempted to address these matters.

Method and Sample

This study[9] was based upon a mailed questionnaire taken from a nationwide sample of adoptive parents. This work is part of a larger, now ongoing study of adoption. The data were collected between November 1974 and March 1976.

The sample was drawn from membership lists provided by adoptive parent organizations throughout the country. The single parent respondents had received their adopted children from a variety of sources domestically and abroad: private agencies, regional social service departments, and independent adoptions.

The sample of adoptive couples tended to overrepresent those who had adopted minority children. The typical adoptive couple in the sample consisted of White, Native American parents who adopted a foreign-born child, most often from Asia. In selecting parent organizations to cooperate with the research, efforts were made to enlist the participation of parent groups whose memberships were acknowledged to include members who had completed transracial and transnational adoptions.

Attempts were also made to ensure the inclusion of at least several constituencies that represented in-country, in-race adopting families. Participating executive officers of the various organizations were asked to provide the names and addresses of any

individuals they may have known who had adopted children but who did not belong to their organizations. Seven hundred thirteen questionnaires were returned in the samples of adoptive parents; a response rate of 60 percent.

A comparison of the characteristics of these respondents with those of other adoption studies reveals that the sub-samples of White native-born parents adopting domestically and abroad do not differ in any significant way from those respondents found in similar studies.[10]

Findings

Of the fifty-eight single adoptive parents in the sample, fifteen were males and forty-three were females. As a group they were much more likely to live in urban areas; couples, on the other hand, were much more likely to be suburbanites.[11] Only 16 percent of the couples lived in urban places, compared to 51 percent of single parents. Seventy percent of the couples lived in suburban areas, compared to 35 percent among single parents. These urban residence patterns of single adoptive parents probably reflect the residential patterns of single individuals, the higher levels of tolerance for unconventional lifestyles found in cities, and the wider availability of services such as clinics, day care centers, special schools, and medical facilities sought by single parents.

Single adoptive parents tended to be more highly educated than their adoptive couple counterparts. Seventy-five percent of the male and female single parents had completed some graduate study beyond the bachelor's degree level, compared with 47 percent of the married fathers and 33 percent of the married mothers. This relationship was statistically significant for the women, and approached significance for the men. Also, single parents generally held higher status occupations; yet, their incomes tended to trail behind those of couples. Only 22 percent of the single parents had annual incomes that exceeded $25,000, compared with 40 percent among the couples.

There are a number of reasons why the incomes of the single parents generally were below those of the couples. First, couples possess dual earning power. Second, women are overrepresented among the single parents, and it is widely known that women in nearly every occupational category earn less than men performing similar functions. Also, women are more likely to pursue their occupations on a part-time basis. Virtually all the single parent women in the sample were employed; 87 percent were working full time, 11 percent part-time, and only one was unemployed.

Other minority members are similarly subject to discrimination. Minority members were far more common among the single parents of the sample. While only 2 percent of the married couples were nonwhite, 14 percent of the single parents were nonwhite.

Further, the single parents were concentrated primarily in two fields: education and social work. Typical occupations included a social worker, a professor of social work, a coordinator for a school based drug prevention program, an elementary school teacher, a special education teacher, a university professor, a teacher of Asian studies, and a school psychologist. It is probable that those choosing careers in human services initially are more likely to be receptive to single parent adoption. Moreover, occupational experiences with children and the needy tend to support and sustain motivations toward single parent adoption. Also, service professionals are more likely to be knowledgeable about children who might be available for adoption.

In terms of religious preferences no differences were noted between single parents and the married adoptive parents. Similarly, no differences were observed in the frequency of religious participation between the two groups. Single parents were somewhat more likely to describe their political viewpoints as liberal. Fifty-eight percent of the female single parents called themselves liberal compared with 45 percent among the wives of the sample; this finding was significant at the .05 level. A similar trend prevailed among

men. Fifty-four percent of the single parent men were self-described liberals, and only 38 percent of the husbands; these differences approached, but did not achieve, statistical significance. The liberal perspectives of single parents may well reflect the occupational ideologies of educational and social service professionals.

While the literature would suggest that single parents are more likely to be closely affiliated with their extended families than married couples, the opposite trend was noted. Sixty-three percent of the adoptive couples saw their extended family members once a month or more often, compared with 55 percent among the single adoptive parents. Although the meaning of these findings is not certain, it is possible that the urban living patterns of the single parents may impose time and interest barriers against more frequent visiting with their usually suburban-based kin. Otherwise, in interaction with friends and organizational involvements, both groups showed similar patterns.

One other difference between the two groups was their relative ages. Although single fathers and husbands showed similarities in age, single mothers tended on the average to be older. Twenty-five percent were forty-five years of age or older, compared with only 11 percent of the wives. Fifty-six percent of the wives were less than thirty-four years of age, compared with only 38 percent of single mothers. These differences may reflect the greater period of time required to achieve sufficient resources, maturity, and the desire to adopt a child as a single parent. And in turn, may correspond to agency requirements for prospective single adoptive parents.

Adoptive Experiences of Single Parents and Couples

Fifty-seven percent of the single adoptive parents were first time adopters. Single parents tended to adopt children of the same sex; 80 percent of the fathers adopted boys and 75 percent of the mothers adopted girls.

As one might have expected, single parents tended to have more difficulties in completing their adoptions. Thirty-nine percent had made three or more previous attempts to adopt, compared with only 12 percent among the couples. Also, experiences with adoption professionals were more often reported by single parents to be negative. Eighteen percent found adoption agencies to be uncooperative, compared with only 6 percent among couples. Fifty-five percent found the Immigration and Naturalization Service to be uncooperative, compared with only 19 percent among couples. Recent changes in immigration laws should reduce frustrating experiences with the Immigration and Naturalization Service for single parents. There was a slight trend toward more single parents reporting uncooperative responses from regional social service departments, which fell short of statistical significance. Among each of the specified caretakers—adoption agencies and immigration social service departments—male single parent adopters tended to report more uncooperative responses. Also, the data revealed that courts are less likely to be helpful to single parents. While 59 percent of the couples found the courts helpful, only 36 percent of single parents described courts this way.

Single parents showed substantially greater willingness to adopt hard-to-place children and these attitudes were reflected in the kinds of children they actually adopted. Seventy-nine percent would accept an older child, compared with 60 percent among adopting couples; 82 percent were willing to adopt a Black child, compared with 56 percent among couples; 51 percent willing to adopt a slightly retarded child, compared with 32 percent of couples; 40 percent were willing to adopt a handicapped child, compared with only 35 percent among couples. Although substantially similar trends in attitude were noted for both single fathers and mothers, men showed a greater tendency to actually adopt various hard-to-place children.

Approximately 60 percent of the men adopted children six years of age or older, compared with 23 percent of the single mothers and 9 percent of the couples. Men also were more likely to adopt Black children. Forty-seven percent had actually adopted Blacks, compared with 30 percent among single mothers and 10 percent among couples. These patterns probably reflect the unwillingness of agencies to place children with male single parents.

As a group, the single parent adopters tended to adopt children who were older. Thirty-three percent adopted children six years or older, 22 percent adopted children between the ages of three and five, and 45 percent adopted children under three years of age. Couples, on the other hand, were much more likely to adopt infants; only 9 percent adopted children over six and 74 percent adopted children under three years of age.

Several major areas where parents normally confront problems in raising children were also investigated. Three areas were surveyed: physical health; emotional adjustments; and growth or development problems. Parents were asked to evaluate whether their children had problems in these areas—often, sometimes, rarely, or never. Parents were also asked whether their adopted children had received any extensive medical care in the past year. The responses given by the single parents paralleled those given by adopting couples. No statistically significant differences were noted, except in one case where making adjustments was difficult.

Male and female single parents reported substantially similar responses in their appraisals of the four problem areas. Single parents reported significantly more emotional adjustment problems than were true for couples. Forty-three percent reported problems sometimes or often, compared with 33 percent among the couples. Many earliers studies of adoption[12] have noted that older child adoptions generally present more adjustment difficulties because the child's personality development is already well underway before

[12]

joining his adoptive family. Therefore, the authors attempted to control the age factor.

When age was controlled they found that the relationship between single parenting and poorer emotional adjustments disappeared for younger children but still persisted among children six years or older. Among seventy-nine cases adopting children six years or older, 77 percent of single parents reported emotional adjustment problems sometimes or often, compared with only 52 percent among couples. This difference was statistically significant with chi square at the .02 level. It is the authors' belief that these trends reflect existing placement realities. Single parents, as the agencies' adoptive placements of last resort, are more often obliged to accept children whose earlier experiences of deprivation, instability, and abuse have led to substantially more emotional adjustment problems. In addition, the professional experiences of these parents may lead them to recognize such problems more readily than other parents.

The respondents were asked to offer a subjective evaluation of their child's overall adjustment. Approximately 68 percent reported excellent adjustments, 26 percent good, 4 percent fair, and 2 percent poor. Substantially similar responses were indicated by both single adoptive parents and couple respondents; no apparent differences were noted between male and female single parents.

Children's adjustments are salient for their parent's own sense of ego integrity and well-being. Therefore, the authors included two indirect measurements of adjustments. Parents were asked how long it took for the child to be considered "their own." Responses were divided into two groups; those taking place within a month or less, and those taking place within longer time periods. Single parents took longer to consider their children as their own. While 36 percent of the single parents required more than a month to feel that the child was their own, only 26 percent of the couples required this much time. This difference fell a fraction short of the .05 level of significance.

Again, the authors believed it advisable to control for the child's age at adoption. With age controlled, both groups required substantially similar time periods to fully accept their adopted children.

Examining gender differences among single parents or adjustment, it was found that males required more time to fully accept their adopted children than females. While only 32 percent of female single parents took more than a month for the child to be regarded as their own, 53 percent of the single fathers took this long. Yet, when the age of the child was adjusted for, these differences disappeared.

The other indirect measure of adjustment used was response to the following question. On the basis of your own experience would you encourage others to adopt as you have adopted? Yes; Yes, with some reservation; No. Eighty-six percent of the adoptive couples responded with unreserved affirmation, compared with only 72 percent among single mothers and 67 percent among single fathers. This difference was statistically significant. Yet, when the authors compared single adopting parents with other couples adopting children of similar ages the statistically significant association between these two variables again dissolved. Apparently, when the authors adjusted for differences in the ages of the child adopted, single parents and couples showed substantially alike responses in recommending adoption to others. This factor would seem consistent with the interpretation that the older more problematic nature of the children adopted by single parents is the source of much of the difference between their experiences and that of the couples.

Agency workers frequently stress the importance of extended families in helping provide aid and support to the single adoptive parent with the many responsibilities of child rearing. In fact, most agencies engaged in single parent placements insist that prospective applicants possess extended family resources before they will be approved. An attempt was made to test the assumption that

extended family affiliations are associated with children's adjustments. Seventy percent of the single adoptive respondents who saw kin at least monthly reported well-adjusted children compared with 63 percent among those seeing kin less often. Thus, the data showed no significant association between the frequency of interaction with kin and adjustment of adopted children. On investigating the two indirect measures of adjustment—the time it takes to regard the child as a member of the family, and the willingness to recommend adoption to others—those who saw kin less often were no more likely to indicate adjustment difficulties than those seeing kin more frequently.

Yet, when the responses of extended families to the adoptions were investigated it was found that when parents reacted positively it correlated with better adjustments. Eighty percent of single parents whose parents responded positively to their adoptions, had children judged to have excellent adjustments, compared with only 40 percent among those whose parents responded with indifference, mixed reactions, or negatively.

This difference was significant at the .02 level. Similar trends were also noted with our indirect measures of adjustment.

Those whose parents responded positively tended to feel that their child became their own sooner. This difference also was statistically significant. They were also more likely to urge others to adopt; this association approached but did not achieve statistical significance. The patterns which were also observed among the single parents were also noted among the adoptive couples. Thus, positive extended family support facilitates adoptive adjustments not only among single parents but among all adoptive parents.

Apparently, friends also play an analogous supportive role in the adoptive process. Seventy-two percent of single parents whose close friends responded positively felt their children were well-adjusted compared with only 46 percent among those whose close friends responded with indifference, mixed feelings, or negatively. This

difference fell a fraction short of significance at the .05 level among the single parents but was significant among the couples. Those whose close friends responded positively were also more likely to urge others to adopt; this difference was significant. The responses of close friends, however, are apparently unrelated to the time it takes for the child to become a member of the family.

Another area that was potentially important was society's response to the single adoptive parent. Does the community generally approve of, or reject the single adoptive parent? The authors investigated what reactions adopting parents experienced from their parents, other extended kin, close friends, and neighbors. Respondents were asked whether reactions had been positive, mixed, indifferent, or negative. On the whole, the experiences of our single parents were comparable to those of the adopting couples. Single adoptive parents reported substantially similar responses from their parents, other relatives, and neighbors as was reported by the adoptive couples; no statistically significant differences were noted between the two groups. Positive responses ranged from a high of 74 percent among mothers' parents to a low of 64 percent among fathers' parents.

Friends of single parents, however, were less likely to respond positively. While 89 percent of couples encountered positive responses by close friends, only 77 percent of the friends of single parents responded similarly.

Male single parents were somewhat more likely to report their friends' disapproval, although this relationship fell short of statistical significance.

Summary

The data have documented some trends that are probably well-known to many single adoptive parents. Namely, that single parents are much more likely to encounter resistance from the various social agencies with whom they must deal in completing their adoptions; they are more likely to be turned away and discouraged in the

adoptive process. Once they adopt, they are more likely to be subject to disapproval by their close friends than is true among other adopters. This uniformly discouraging response on the part of the community seems to be slightly more intense toward male single adoptive parents. Yet, these negative evaluations appear to be without foundation when one considers the outcomes of these adoptions. With few exceptions, both male and female single parents report substantially similar experiences to adoptive couples in raising adopted children.

The results obtained in this research offer positive support for the new and growing practice of single parent adoption. With the one exception of emotional adjustment problems, it was found that single adoptive parents report substantially similar information on the variety and severity of problems encountered in raising their children as is reported by other adoptive couples. When controlling for the age of the children adopted, both direct and indirect assessments of children's overall adjustments show fundamentally corresponding patterns among single parents and adoptive couples. These findings confirm earlier studies on the success of the overwhelming majority of single parent placements and suggest that single parents are as viable a resource for adoptive placements as couples. In fact, given the present discrimination against single parents in the adoption process, the absence of spouse supports and their more limited economic resources, these positive findings suggest that single adoptive parents possess unusually high commitments to parenting.

Before being entirely confident that single parents offer similar benefits to waiting children as are found in two-parent homes, additional studies will be necessary.

Future research should examine more objective indicators of adjustments such as school records, psychological adjustment test scores, and so forth, among comparable groups of children, in single-parent and in two-parent homes.

If future studies confirm the present results then there would be a need for reconceptualization of a great many theories of child development. Numerous viewpoints of child development maintain that two-parent families are indispensible to successfully resolve the Oedipus complex, to offer role modeling opportunities, and to insure the intergenerational transmission of cultural values and conforming behavior patterns. Most of the theories positing the inherent need for the two-parent family were conceived, however, during the early and mid-twentieth century, at a time when sex roles were far more differentiated and segregated than is true today.

Today, with married women participating in the labor force and pursuing careers in formerly male-dominated occupations in ever increasing numbers, with household and child-rearing tasks increasingly becoming shared by both men and women alike, with formal educational experiences of both sexes more nearly convergent there is considerable commingling of sex roles. No longer are men the exclusive task specialists and women the providers of nurturance they were in earlier times. With the increasing flexibility of contemporary sex roles, culturally appropriate role learning can be acquired from either parent as well as from both parents.

The findings outlined here also point to a need for reconsideration of the role of extended families in aiding and supporting the single adoptive parent. The mere availability of extended families, whether through living in the same community or frequent mutual visitations, has little to do with contributing to the success of single parent adoptions. A core of positively responding intimates, composed of kin or close friends—rather than availability of kin per se—would seem to offer a good prognosis for adoption success.

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William Feigelman and Arnold R. Silverman

—Reprinted from *Social Casework*, July 1977

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ON BECOMING A SINGLE ADOPTIVE PARENT

What leads a single woman to adopt three preteen sisters?. . . Did your family support your decision to adopt?. . . How were you treated by the agency? . . . Isn't raising three youngsters expensive?

These are some of the questions asked of me, a single woman who became a parent by choice—adoption. Generally, I respond quickly, give pat answers, and go on about my work (I am a special education teacher of learning-disabled youngsters) and parenthood. For this article, however, I took the time to reflect, to reminisce. I reread parts of a diary I kept during the process of adopting. Let me share some of the excerpts with you now.

January 1, 1978—My New Year's Resolution is to look seriously into adopting a child. I've already begun an investigation of agencies. Before Christmas, I phoned Friends of Children of Vietnam. The person I spoke with was most encouraging. She suggested contacting Colorado Friends for All Children and SAFE (Single Adoptive Families Everywhere). Before I could call either, Friends of Children contacted me! Good sign, I figure!

January 10—Went to my first actual adoption meeting. It was sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Adoption Exchange. Found out that there are mostly older kids needing homes. How old is older?

January 13—A Friday. Not unlucky at all. I went to my first SAFE meeting. Exciting! A new single mother shared her parenting adventures with us. She applied to adopt last January and had a 10-year-old girl placed with her by August. She spoke about her real feelings about the intrusion on her privacy, her concern about not feeling instant love for her daughter. She was believable.

January 23—I think I've found my agency. Friends of Children referred me to a brand new agency called SPARC (later renamed Family Builders by Adoption). They work with single people. Sounds like what I'm looking for and it's just in my price range—free! Parenting meetings start next Monday. I can hardly wait.

February 7—It's a little scary to think about having my own kids here one day. I wonder what they'll look like and what their names will be. I've often thought of what I'd name my little girl, but these kids will already have names—names which will be them.

February 13—SPARC meeting. Exploring older child adoption. Much to consider in adopting an older child: his or her memories, attachments, extended family. I find I'm most interested in the 5-9 age bracket: a boy and a girl or two girls.

March 20—Had my intake interview for my homestudy—exciting, but not difficult. Sometimes I worry about any children I might have. What if I can't handle them? What if I can't afford them? What if I do more harm than good? I guess I'm concerned about the responsibility. I'm in it all alone. When I consider the alternative (always being alone), however, I feel certain that motherhood is for me!

April 14—Another homestudy visit. Today I learned that, in most cases, adoption of older children and sibling groups is subsidized. That takes away a lot of my concern about expense.

May 18—Moved into "our" new house.

October 19—After an active summer, it's time to get back to business. I'm going to see pictures of available children tomorrow. Here's hoping!

October 31—Learned about two sisters, ages 7 and 9. They have an older sister living apart from them. I'd love a lot of kids, but I don't know if I can afford them.

November 1—I have my daughters! They'll be here a week from Friday. Wow!

November 2—Making many phone calls. The more I tell people about Lori and Marcie, the more excited I become.

November 3—Their pictures arrived. The girls are darling! I showed them around and everyone else thinks so, too.

November 6—Met my girls. They're beautiful in every way. Lori, the older one, is very thin, and outgoing; Marcie is rounder and sensitive. Can hardly wait to see them again, and, most of all, to have them here.

November 8—A quick visit with my girls. I feel so lucky to get such lovely children. Hope I can keep them that way. Tomorrow they come!

That was the last entry in my diary. I often think I should start another but, as I fall happily exhausted into bed each evening, keeping a diary is the last thing on my mind.

I now have three beautiful, active and happy little girls. Their older sister, Cindy, was reunited with them in June.

People have asked me about the adjustment to having several children. I grew up as one of six children, so a busy household feels natural. It's nice to be cooking for four instead of one.

And I do get home in time to cook. That's one of the benefits of my job. The hours I work as a teacher are similar to the girls' schedule. They may have to be alone for a short while, but they are 8, 10, and 12 now, and can be trusted to take care of themselves. My principal has been helpful. When I take the girls to a medical appointment, he usually arranges to have someone cover for me. Friends are very supportive, too.

How about my social life? That's another question I've been asked. Becoming a mother has not adversely affected my social life. The men I'm attracted to are comfortable around children. They often warm up to the girls first.

As for me, I'd gone through the period of directing my energies toward a career. I knew myself...and I knew I was ready for a family. I have one now. The girls are popular, and doing well in school. We share so many interests—sports, music, the arts—I always have someone to do things with me. My family and friends have accepted us as a complete family. They regard us as lucky to have each other. Indeed, we are lucky. Everything fell so perfectly in place concerning our timing, placement, and adoption, we consider ours a match made in heaven. But we know there were human beings—especially our worker at SPARC—who helped and supported us, too, and we always will be grateful to them.

Am I glad I made the decision to adopt? Absolutely. For three very good reasons: my daughters.

Amanda Richards

—Reprinted from *Adoption Report* (Spring 1980 issue), a quarterly newsletter from the North American Center on Adoption.

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☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1981 — 720-019/4540 REGION 3-I

DHHS Publication No. (OHDS) 81-30306

Issued April 1981